

2021 SAMHSA SOAR APRIL E-NEWS



Spring into Action with OAT!

The time for collecting SOAR outcomes is right around the corner, and the SAMHSA SOAR TA Center wants to ensure that you and your community are prepared! The upcoming outcomes season will collect decisions received on SOAR-assisted applications between July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021. Our hope is that you are regularly logging into the Online Application Tracking (OAT) system and tracking outcomes throughout the year! Regardless of whether you're a regular tracker or new to the process, here are some simple steps to take to make sure your outcomes are ready and up to date.

- First, ensure that you are registered in the OAT system; if you are not, you can register [here](#).
- If you are new to tracking outcomes or want a refresher, we encourage you to review the [OAT User Guide](#) as well as a recent recording of the OAT Orientation [webinar](#). During the orientation, we walk through entering a claim and answer participant questions. The next webinar will take place on Tuesday, April 20, at 2:00 p.m. ET. [Register for this event](#).



Why Outcomes Matter!

Outcomes are key to growing a successful SOAR initiative! Tracking outcomes ensures that your work and impact as a SOAR-trained case worker is documented, and it also contributes to your state's overall outcomes. Strong outcomes can also lead to additional funding for SOAR dedicated case workers!

Recognizing National Social Security Month

In recognition of National Social Security Month, we would like to honor Mike Nolan, one of the SOAR initiative's longest-standing supporters at the Social Security Administration (SSA). Mike has worked for SSA since 1976, and has committed his career to advancing SSA's mission to the public. Mike currently works for the Chicago Regional Office of the Center for Disability. He has been involved with and supporting SOAR efforts in the region and nationally since 2009 and has served on the SAMHSA



SOAR Expert Panel since its inception in 2015. Staff of the SAMHSA SOAR TA Center first met Mike at a SOAR Planning Forum in Indianapolis in January 2010, and just this month, 11 years later, he has helped us reconnect with SSA in Indiana. Through the years, Mike has shared key resources, important news stories, answers to technical questions, and thoughtful reflections on the importance of SOAR and our service to our fellow Americans. We are grateful to Mike and to our SSA collaborators around the country.

Pay Equity for Social Workers

March marked the occasion to celebrate the contributions of all women and their historical impact within the United States and abroad. On March 24, 2021, the National Committee on Pay Equity observed Equal Pay Day, a symbolic commemoration dedicated to raising awareness of the gender pay gap. In the United States, this date symbolizes how far into the year the average woman must work to earn what the average man earns in the previous year regardless of experience or job type. With women being the majority of case workers in the field, both of these observances bear on the state of SOAR staffing. When employers recognize the value of SOAR case workers and coordinators by offering them equitable salaries, the benefits go beyond the individual case worker. Fair compensation may also help with staff retention and ultimately increase the sustainability of SOAR work.

[Click here to continue reading.](#)

SOAR Job Opportunities

Nevada

[Well Care](#) is seeking a full-time SOAR case manager in Reno, Nevada. Learn more about this position on the [SOARWorks website](#). Do you have a job posting you would like to share with the SOAR community? Please submit it to the [SAMHSA SOAR TA Center](#)!

Sharing Our Successes

Funding Success in Michigan Thanks to a Chance Meeting



In Michigan's rural Upper Peninsula, the Superior Alliance for Independent Living was looking to add SOAR back into the portfolio of services they provide to persons with disabilities. They had been a SOAR provider and trainer up until 2015. The area's only managed care organization, the Upper Peninsula Health Plan, was looking for impactful ways to utilize the community health workers they provide under their Medicaid managed care contract with the state. A chance meeting of the executive directors of both organizations suggested a solution that served the needs of both agencies and amplified the service they both provided to the local population of people experiencing homelessness: working together to bring back SOAR.

Since October 2019, the managed care organization has funded a half-time community health worker at the Superior Alliance for Independent Living to provide SOAR assistance to the guests at two local homeless shelters. The results of this funding partnership have been so successful that a second, full-time community health worker, trained as a SOAR practitioner, has been added to serve clients of the region's substance use treatment providers.

Florida Participant SOARS to Success and Housing Stability

Vivianne Vonador from Talbot House Ministries in Lakeland, Florida, wrote in to share this incredible SOAR success story:

"Mr. Williams* was referred to me from the Good Samaritan Clinic with Talbot House Ministries. He was living in a tent. I met with this participant and started the SOAR process in September of 2020. I met him weekly and guided him through the process, each time trying to encourage him to come into the program at Talbot House Ministries and get off the streets; each time, he declined. This participant had a few medical appointments scheduled with SSA, which his sister would transport him to and from. Even though Mr. Williams was living in a tent, he attended every appointment with the assistance of his sister. Later, she and I met and both agreed to work together for the best interest of her brother.



With assistance, this participant completed all questionnaire forms (Work History, Pain Questionnaire, Third Party Contact List, Cardiac Questionnaire, and Function Report) sent by SSA. All of this participant's medical records and Medical Summary Report were faxed to SSA as well. On December 14, 2020, he received a check for \$2349.00, including back pay from October to December 2020, and he will receive \$794.00 every month. Mr. Williams was so excited, he then asked for the contact number for the Homeless Coalition. He contacted the homeless coalition and put his name on the list for housing assistance. He now has medical insurance and received an eye exam, which allowed him to get new glasses. Mr. Williams now lives with his sister while waiting on the homeless coalition for housing assistance/placement. He has shared that he never knew he could be so blessed with such help, and he's glad he made the appointment with the Good Samaritan Clinic with Talbot House Ministries. Mr. Williams now has hobbies and a fishing license. Each time I see him, he

looks much stronger and better, and he is still attending his medical appointments. I am so proud of being able to help this participant. It took 88 days from start to approval for SSI.”

[Submit Your SOAR Success](#)

**Sharing Our Successes stories are edited for brevity and clarity. All client names have been changed to protect anonymity.*

Events

[SOAR and Equity Webinar— Improving Equity and Inclusion in SOAR Programs](#)

April 21, 2021, 3:00-4:30 p.m. ET

Ensuring equity in SOAR program implementation requires providers to consider how implicit bias may contribute to disparities in how SOAR services are accessed by and delivered to diverse groups. On this webinar, the SAMHSA SOAR TA Center will address barriers to equity in SOAR implementation and present strategies to overcome them.

The webinar will include a panel discussion of a diverse group of SOAR providers who are working on creating equitable and more culturally relevant SOAR programs in their communities.



[Register for the Webinar](#)

[SOARing Over Lunch Conference Calls](#)

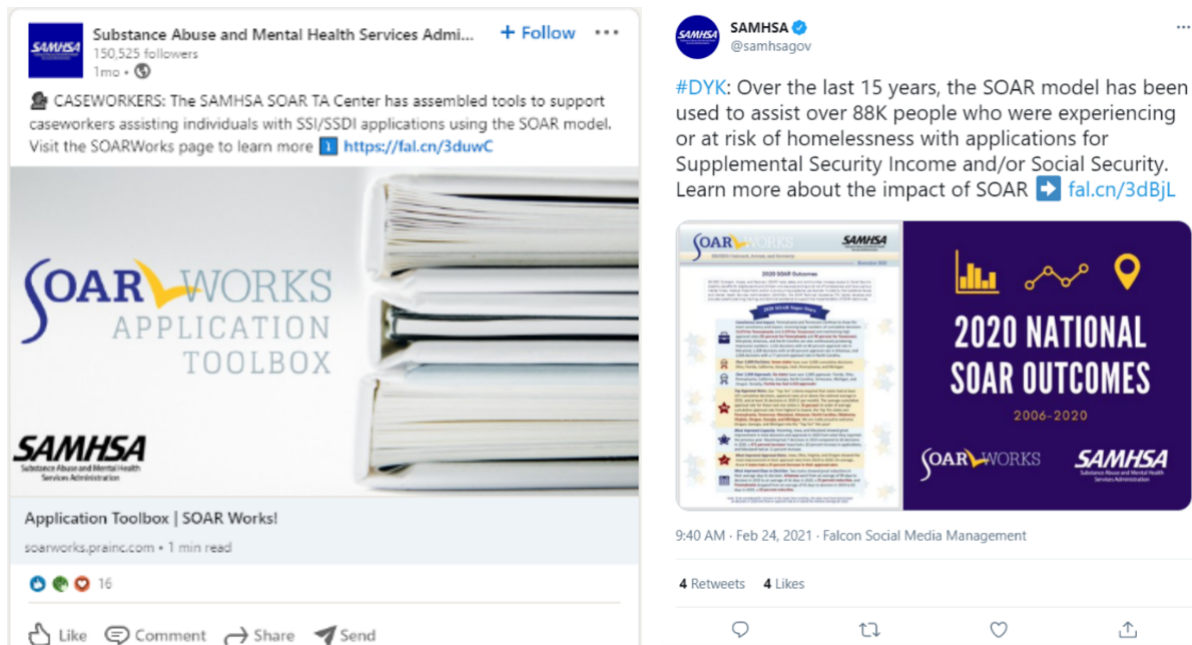
April 13, 2021, 1:00-2:00 p.m. ET

The next SOARing Over Lunch Conference Call will take place on April 13, 2021, at 1:00 p.m. ET! The SAMHSA SOAR TA Center hosts this series of informal monthly calls designed to help support SOAR efforts across the country. Participants can join to ask about any SOAR-related question they may have.

[Add SOARing Over Lunch to Your Calendar](#)

Get Social with the SAMHSA SOAR TA Center

Hear more about what SAMHSA SOAR is up to via [@samhsagov](#) on Twitter, [@samhsa](#) on Facebook, and [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#) on LinkedIn!



Federal Resources

Updated SSA COVID-19 Procedures

How will SSA process my notice of appointment while emergency procedures are in place?

Beginning March 11, 2021, SSA has revised their temporary procedures to allow you to use different methods to sign the notice of appointment of a representative. [These temporary procedures and more details can be found here.](#)

Social Security Resumes Certain Hearing Dismissals

Official statement from SSA concerning hearing dismissals:

“We have lifted the temporary suspension of issuing dismissals for untimely filed hearing requests and for failure to appear at a scheduled hearing. We implemented that temporary suspension October 5, 2020. Effective March 8, 2021, absent a showing of good cause, we will resume issuing dismissals in cases involving an untimely filed hearing request, or when neither the claimant nor the appointed representative, if any, appeared at a scheduled hearing.

Before issuing a dismissal, however, we will take additional steps to confirm that we are complying with established notice procedures including conducting quality reviews for these specific dismissals.” Read more [here](#).

A New Secure Option to Receive Disability Case Documents

SSA has developed a new, secure delivery option for case documents. Claimants with a *my* Social Security account can now use it to access case documents through their account’s Message Center.

This new process allows claimants with a *my* Social Security account to receive a PDF containing their case documents. To enable this option, claimants must contact the local

office, hearings office, or Appeals Council branch where their case is pending to request the file. Next, claimants should turn on notifications in their *my* Social Security account Message Center to ensure they receive a text or email when their documents are available.

Learn more at [Get Your Electronic Case Documents Online](#).

Video Hearings Now Offered from SSA

The Social Security Administration now offers a new option for hearings! For those who received a denial on their application for Social Security Disability benefits and appealed to an administrative law judge, they may consider conducting the hearing through our new option of online video hearings.



Please review and share this publication [Online Video Hearings at the Social Security Administration](#) from SSA for additional information. You can also watch this short video [SSA Online Video Hearings](#) and check out SSA's [Video Hearings Page](#) to access our user guide and FAQs.

[Click here to learn more.](#)



The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) Technical Assistance (TA) Center is sponsored by SAMHSA, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

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